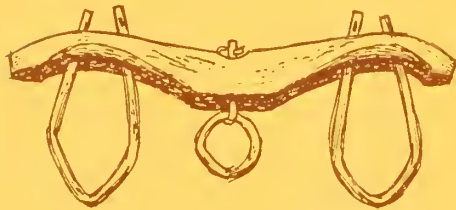


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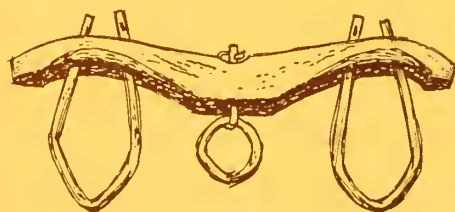
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SIFTING THE
HERNDON 
SOURCES 



By
LOUIS A. WARREN
DIRECTOR
LINCOLN NATIONAL LIFE FOUNDATION

LINCOLN FELLOWSHIP OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

1948



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PRE~
FACE

WHEN THE LINCOLN FELLOWSHIP OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA learned that Dr. Louis A. Warren, Director of the Lincoln National Life Foundation, could arrange to be present at its thirteenth annual meeting, the suggestion was made that he prepare a paper, on some timely theme of his own selection, for this anniversary occasion.

This Dr. Warren consented to do and, on February 12, 1948, the manuscript of his essay on *Sifting the Herndon Sources* was read to an appreciative audience.

This fruitage of Dr. Warren's research, here preserved in permanent form, under the aegis of the Fellowship, is thus made available for those Lincoln students who may wish to share with the members of this study group the message brought to them by their Lincoln Day guest-speaker.

THE PUBLICATIONS COMMITTEE

FORE~ WORD

CHANNING POLLOCK once wrote of “Intellectual pygmies who would shrink the giants of history to their own . . . mediocrity.”

WILLIAM H. HERNDON was such a mediocre man—a faddist to whom the latest book read gave the full answer, an amateur psychoanalyst who also claimed the clairvoyance, not merely to read the unspoken thoughts of the Lincoln mind, but to give the very words Mr. Lincoln would have used had he voiced these thoughts.

Herndon was a lawyer who failed to check the records of Washington County to learn of the marriage of Thomas Lincoln and Nancy Hanks; and he it was who launched the myth that Mr. Lincoln failed to put in appearance for his marriage to Mary Todd on the “fatal January first,” when a simple check of marriage license records in Springfield would have shown that no marriage license had been issued to them, for the simple reason that none had been applied for.

Such are not the sources of reliable biography. Rather thus are myths made.

If Herndon had really understood and appreciated Mr. Lincoln, it is almost certain that there would have been substantial contact between them during Lincoln’s presidency. There was almost none.

It takes more than eyes which do not see and ears which do not hear to appraise a mind lonely and uncommunicative in its greatness, save only to those who also genuinely thought through to true conclusions. A collection of some facts scattered through a mass of emotional inconsistency is indeed stuff that needs sifting.

As Professor James G. Randall has well indicated, “the stuff of this (the Herndon-Weik) collection needs sifting,” and the “Lincoln he has given us needs reconsideration.”

In “Sifting the Herndon Sources,” Dr. Warren has done a masterful job. He has turned long-needed light of searching analysis on Herndon and his methods and sources.

RALPH G. LINDSTROM



THE OPENING of Abraham Lincoln's personal and executive papers on July 26, 1947, at the Library of Congress, marked an important epoch in the annals of American biography. A new era is now upon us which invites this generation of authors to make a far-reaching contribution toward an objective portrait of one of the world's outstanding characters. The importance of such an enterprise cannot be over exaggerated.

This vast compilation of writings, aggregating more than 18,000 documents and covering the period from Lincoln's term in Congress to the day of his assassination, will encourage biographical effort far beyond any previous undertaking. Historians as a rule have had neither the time nor the means for engaging in long periods of exhaustive research adventures. Now that these important papers have been micro-filmed and the contents have become accessible in research centers, the incentive for constructive biographical studies of the Emancipator should be greatly enhanced.

There is also in the Library of Congress a collection of manuscripts, known as the Herndon-Weik collection of papers, gathered by William H. Herndon, Mr. Lincoln's former law partner. It is these papers, assembled after the President's death but relating mostly to that period previous to Lincoln's congressional term, with which we are chiefly concerned. They are of an entirely different character than the authentic documents in the newly-acquired collection. They refer primarily to the more personal traditional incidents in Lincoln's life. With respect to the time occurrence element they precede the larger and more valuable gift of Robert Todd Lincoln. The Herndon-Weik collection is accessible to all, as the contents of most of these personal papers were published ten years ago in a book entitled *The Hidden Lincoln*.¹

Before any major effort can be made to erect a superstructure in the field of Lincoln biography, special attention must be given to the character of these Herndon papers, which have largely influenced our present conclusions about the birth, childhood and early years of Abraham Lincoln. An objective story of Lincoln, beginning at the time of his emergence as a national figure when a member of Congress at thirty-eight years of age, cannot stand securely on the foundation of folklore and tradition now portraying his early life. The story of an honest man should be based on something more substantial than reminiscences, gossip, innuendoes, falsehoods, misrepresentations, and almost every type of pseudo-evidence which filters through the Herndon-Weik collection.

We shall call in as an observer to look over the material available in the Herndon-Weik collection, Professor James G. Randall, head of the history department of the University of Illinois, who has been called by Allan Nevins, "The most profound modern Lincoln historian." Professor Randall uses, in the preface of his two-volume work on *Lincoln the President*, several references to the Herndon collection which will guide our arguments. He also suggests some timely words which will serve as captions in the development of the discussion.

"RECONSIDERATION"

There is a general acceptance of the statement, that the Herndon collection of papers have more widely influenced the story of Lincoln's early years and personal life than all other contributions combined. Even *The Lincoln Reader*, a Book of the Month Club selection for 1947, containing an anthology of writings by Lincoln authors, contains thirty sub-chapters from the Herndon sources. Mr. Randall states, "Popular ideas of Lincoln are in a large part traceable to that picturesque but provocative individual, William H. Herndon. . . . The Lincoln he has given us needs *reconsideration* . . ."₂

The fact that Herndon was Lincoln's law partner for sixteen years has contributed much to the general acceptance of what he submitted. Because of this association the traditions Herndon circulated received almost immediate acceptance without any questioning, supported by this supposed first-hand evidence. His opinions, so dogmatically expressed throughout the years following Lincoln's death, have apparently settled questions which otherwise would have been open to controversy. The passing of time seems to have stamped on his observations conclusions that will not be easily repudiated. The reconsideration of much he wrote has led Professor Randall to observe, "an uncommon effort is needed to disengage reality from the accumulated deposit which the years have brought."₃

Certainly no student of Lincoln would be willing to have the entire collection labeled spurious. That there are valuable facts set forth that should be preserved, is quite evident to all. There are times when the burden of proof of a statement rests on Herndon, and there are other occasions when the burden of proof rests upon his critics. The reconsideration of the entire Herndon collection should at least be approached with an open mind.

“SIFTING”

The reluctance to have pretty stories repudiated, the humiliation experienced by observing long-held theories proved false, the necessity of changing viewpoints, the spirit of community provincialism which would authenticate purely traditional incidents, are factors which make it difficult to show much progress in the reevaluation of the miscellaneous Herndon sources. If any constructive contribution is to be made, the task of investigating the accuracy of certain pieces of folklore and the willingness to abide by the findings of modern scholarship must be accepted. Professor Randall reacted with respect to the Herndon papers: “the stuff of this collection is uneven and needs *sifting*.”⁴

The task of sifting or screening this assortment of information is a difficult one. To use building-construction terms in keeping with the effort, electric hammers will be needed to break up great blocks of evidence and reduce the residue into a granulated substance which will allow the particles of value to be made available for the new enterprise. Also bull-dozers must be utilized to reach down to the subsoil on which some of the traditions rest. In fact, a better job could be done if an entirely new foundation could be laid, using only such construction material as has successfully passed through the screen.

Thanks to the Lincoln papers at Washington, there is now presented the possibility of erecting a superstructure that will be unequalled in American biography. It must have a foundation, however, in which there are no flaws. The ingredients which are fashioned to establish a supporting base must also pass the objectivity test.

“TRUTH”

One of the most orthodox and unnecessary practices of a historian is to continually emphasize his own integrity, leaving the implication that his contemporaries may not be so richly endowed. In Herndon's letters to his correspondents this habit of self-recommendation for truthfulness takes on a Washington flavor. Professor Randall's comment on Herndon's claim of unusual veracity places the problem squarely before us.

“Herndon has profited by his well-known statement that he loved the *truth*. . . One must go back of this assertion to ask whether a man who thought he could grasp the *truth* by intuition could recognize and adequately set forth the *truth*. . . . He is sometimes unreliable even about the facts of his own life.”⁵

Herndon wrote to a friend in 1866, the year following Lincoln's death: "He who writes a biography of Mr. Lincoln from my facts writes the only true life of the good and great man that can by any possibility be written now or in the future."⁶

Herndon wrote in reply to one correspondent: "You once said to me that you thought I somewhat exaggerated. In some particulars I may have done so."⁷ To another he wrote, "I stated things to avoid the consequence of the loss, that is, I didn't want people to know everything, *nor the exact truth at all times.*"⁸ On still another occasion he wrote: "When I spoke of making these revelations to the world I did not intend to tell what I write you, only a part of it in very indirect language, by hints."⁹

When Lamon's *The Life of Abraham Lincoln* came from the press in 1870, Herndon made the comment that it was, "The truest life that has ever been written of a man taken as a whole." The fact is that the book was so full of error, and of biased viewpoint, that the publishers refused to proceed with the second contemplated volume.

There does not seem to be any valid reason for concluding that Herndon was any more truthful than other biographers, or that superior authority should be given to his affirmations over those of other honest men. Herndon wrote to Hart on one occasion, with reference to his contemplated book on Lincoln, "Men shall intuitively feel that the biography is true."¹⁰ Randall expresses the present reaction to the reliability of Herndon's notes held by modern writers in these words, "Mere citations to the Herndon-Weik Collection are by no means enough."¹¹

"FACE VALUE"

Professor Beale in his excellent discussion on the "predisposition" of authors, classifies under the caption, "Cocksurenness," those who write so-called definitive books and who feel that they have spoken the last word on any subject.¹²

The superiority complex which Herndon displayed far excels any exhibition which appears in the whole field of Lincoln literature. To make such statements as he ventures, reveals an attitude that would banish all other contributors from the field of constructive Lincoln biography. He does not confine his claims to the scope of *Lincolniana*, but states that his records are "the most perfect of any living or dead man—probably Johnson's biography by Boswell excepted."¹³ In a letter written to Carpenter, the artist, Herndon inquires, "And now shall

the world be shut out of this temple of intelligence, prohibited from seeing and knowing what I see and know?"¹⁴ He continues in this same strain, in a letter to Hart: "Would to God the world knew what I do, and save me the necessity of being the man to open and explain all clear as the noonday sun!"¹⁵

If the above declaration had come from any other biographer in the field of Lincolniana it would be exhibited as ego amplified. Yet Herndon goes one step farther in his claim to superior knowledge of Lincoln, and runs in competition with the Almighty himself. He wrote to Arnold in 1866, in referring to Abraham Lincoln: "Poor man! the world knows thee not, and who shall defend thee and set thee right before the world, *and chain and rivet* the deep, eternal, and forever abiding sympathy of mankind to thee? . . . Kind man, good man, noble man, who knows thy sufferings but one man, and God?"¹⁶ Yet in the light of this statement and similar comments, Joseph Fort Newton, in his book on Herndon and Lincoln, makes this statement: "For one thing, the modesty of the author [Herndon] must impress the reader from the first line to the last."¹⁷

"REMINISCENCES"

Notwithstanding the unusual claims for accuracy by the collector, Herndon, the most voluminous bulk of data in his assembled writings can be classified as reminiscences. Mr. Randall comments: "One can doubt his accumulated mass of *reminiscences* and still give a measure of credence to descriptions which arose from close association."¹⁸ There would be no injustice done to the Herndon collection if it were called "Herndon's Reminiscences;" thus the very character of the writings should change the attitude of the historians towards the accuracy of his statements. Can any man, however honest, without contemporary notes to aid him, remember accurately incidents which occurred a half century, or even a quarter of a century, before? Herndon wrote to Jesse M. Weik, as late as December 1, 1888, fifty-four years after he first met Lincoln: "In writing what you do write, if you wish to know my authority, when, where, etc., I can tell you quickly. In fact, Jesse, I have in my memory a thousand unwritten facts about our good man, Abe, that were told me by good and truthful people in addition to what I learned from 1834 to 1865 of him by actual contact."¹⁹

Herndon wrote to Lamon on March 6, 1870: "When I was around taking evidence soon after and long after Mr. Lincoln's death, *much, much* was told me which I did not reduce to writing, but which, *much of which*, floats about in my memory."²⁰ On still another occasion Herndon wrote a letter to Mr. Weik

in which he recognized that his memory might be somewhat faulty, stating, "Human memory is uncertain."²¹ He then advises Weik to be on his guard as to what he [Herndon] said.

There is no evidence that Herndon had an unusual or remarkable memory, but there is available a statement in his own hand which might suggest that his memory was not so dependable. Lamon was making some inquiries from Herndon in 1870, about some promises made to people about publishing certain facts, to which Herndon replied: "It has been a long time since I got the information, and as I have passed through several hells since 1866 and 7, I may have forgotten my promises."²² The fact is, the "long time" that he mentions could not have exceeded five years and, if his memory had failed him here, what about the longer intervals between events and recitals?

"MIND READING"

The earlier comment by Professor Randall, with reference to the ability of Mr. Herndon to "grasp the truth by intuition," is enlarged upon by this observation: "He [Herndon] prided himself on a kind of clairvoyance and a knack for mind reading."²³ Lincoln wrote to Lamon in 1870, "I know he scarcely trusted any man with his more profound secrets. I had to read them in his facts, acts, hints, face, *as well as what he did not do nor say*, however absurd this last expression may appear to be."²⁴

Mr. Lincoln, however, was not Herndon's first psychic client. Early in 1855 he began his psycho-analysis of Stephen A. Douglas which he put down in writing. He advised Theodore Parker on one occasion: "I am hard to fool, friend, by man. I can read him [Douglas] about as well as he knows himself."²⁵ The results of one of Herndon's early examinations of a Douglas speech at Springfield in 1855 follows: "Mr. Douglas . . . addressed us in one of his speeches, known for power of a peculiar nature; namely, energy, duplicity, and dexterity, driven by an abandon fired by rum—in short, a low, base, hellish effort at renaissance."²⁶ Two years later, in a letter to Parker, Herndon said: "Douglas is, well—what shall I say?—an unscrupulous dog. He is a hybrid; Nature says to him Perish and Rot!"²⁷ During the debates in 1858, Herndon wrote Parker: "Douglas is an ambitious and unscrupulous man; he is the greatest liar in all America."²⁸

Even after Douglas passed away, Herndon (in recalling his conferences with political leaders) repeated the assertion that Douglas "was not to be trusted, was

conscienceless, and without political principles or honor.”²⁹ In still another letter, he made this statement: “Douglas [is] a rake and a roue by nature, a demagogue and a shallow man.”³⁰

We wonder if some of the biographers of Stephen A. Douglas would accept these characterizations as presenting a correct analysis of the Little Giant.

Apparently they have not drawn heavily upon Herndon’s deductions for reasons which are quite evident to any one. Yet this is the clairvoyant whom the American people have allowed to speak with authority on the processes of Lincoln’s mind and his mental reaction in almost everything, including his theories about slavery as well as his attitude toward his wife.

Herndon wrote to Lamon in 1870, “I know Lincoln better than I know myself.”³¹ He further advised Lamon: “I see him [Lincoln] in my mind from his cradle to his grave. . . . I know so much of Lincoln’s trials and troubles and difficulties that I see and feel them all as my own—so closely do they touch me and my good friend.”³² When the Herndon-Weik book was finally finished, Herndon wrote a letter to Bartlett, stating: “The *Life* is mostly an analysis of *Lincoln*, an attempt to let people peep into the inner man, a thread of his history running through the book at the same time.”³³

“PSYCHO-ANALYTICAL CONJECTURE”

Herndon not only essayed to read Lincoln’s mind in clairvoyant fashion but also he undertook, as he stated in one of his letters, to “write out a truthful history or biography of the man, mental, moral, religious, etc., analytically, as well as otherwise, so that the reader would have a full view of the whole subject. . . . The first part of this proposition showing what he did and why he did it, and the second showing what he *did not* and the reasons why.”³⁴

Herndon prepared some lectures which have been widely used as sources, and he makes these comments on them: “My first two lectures, as you are aware, were attempts to analyze Mr. Lincoln’s mind. My third lecture was to show his Patriotism and Statesmanship. My second and third lectures were attempts to show the *practical application* of that mind to things, etc. My fourth lecture is an attempt to show external influences on it—material and mental—matter and mind on mind.”³⁵

In submitting the reason for the selection of subjects in his lectures, Herndon stated: “The analysis of Mr. Lincoln’s pure abstract mind *was an absolute ne-*

cessity.”³⁶ Yet to Truman Bartlett he wrote, “Lincoln was a curious, mysterious, quite an incomprehensible man.”³⁷

There is little question that these lectures were pure conjecture, but to take them as historical essays is another matter. Not only did Herndon attempt to reveal motives, anticipate reactions, and put in Lincoln’s mind, thoughts which, it is difficult to believe, the Emancipator ever surmised; but he is said to have trained his collaborator, Jesse M. Weik, also to analyze Lincoln’s mind, although it is not known that Weik ever met Lincoln.

Weik, who actually wrote the Herndon-Weik three-volume work, observed: “From Herndon I learned how to measure Lincoln, to dissect his moral structure and analyze his mental processes. No other man ever lived who knew so much about the immortal Railsplitter, who comprehended him so thoroughly, who had dug so deep and laid bare the springs of action, the motives that animated his ‘clear head, brave heart, and strong right arm’.”³⁸

“RHETORIC”

There were two types of Herndon’s collected evidence especially in which Professor Randall seems to have had no confidence, the psycho-analytical conjectures just mentioned and the oratory, suggested in the following excerpt: “His [Herndon’s] down-to-earth frankness, his pioneer tang and flavor, may be appreciated while one keeps a wholesome distrust for his excesses of *rhetoric*. . . .”³⁹

Any other contributor to *Lincolniana*, who would attempt to use such complimentary language about Lincoln as is found in Herndon’s writings, would be set down as a rank eulogist; from Herndon’s lips however, incoherent conclusions viewed by his admirers are but expressions of a genius, whose mind the layman cannot comprehend and who is called “the father of the school of realistic Lincoln biographers.”

Herndon wrote to Arnold in 1866, “I think Mr. Lincoln was the best man, the kindest, tenderest, noblest, loveliest, *since Christ*. He was better and purer than Washington; and in mind he stands incomparable, grandly looming up. He is now the great central figure in American History. God bless Abraham Lincoln! . . . What made him so tender, so good, so honest, so just, so noble, so pure, so exalted, so liberal, so tolerant, so divine, as it were?”⁴⁰ Yet, in another

instance, this man with all the attributes of a God, according to Herndon was guilty of indiscrete relations which left him with a social disease.

Eight years after Herndon wrote the eulogistic letter to Arnold, he was still praising the virtues of Lincoln in these words: "I never knew him to do a wrong thing, never knew him to do a mean thing, never knew him to do any little dirty trick. He was always noble. In his nature he felt nobly and acted nobly. I never knew so true a man, so good a man, so just a one, so incorrupted and incorruptible a one."⁴¹ If any Lincoln student except Herndon had written this, the definitive biographers would have exclaimed, "Shades of Weems!" Eulogy amplified!

Yet with this eulogistic rhetoric in mind, it is almost incomprehensible to believe that the same man could write, "when he [Lincoln] used a man and sucked all the uses out of him, he would throw away the *thing* as an old orange peeling."⁴² Herndon also stated that Lincoln, "was true to his friends, never deserting them till they deserted virtue, veracity, and integrity."⁴³ Yet, in another instance, he wrote that Lincoln was a "remorseless trimmer with men. They were his tools, and when they were used up he threw them aside as old iron and took up new tools."⁴⁴ With this contradictory rhetoric in mind, it is difficult to accept Herndon's conclusion. "If the people are misled it shall not come from me, nor my side of the house."⁴⁵

Illustrations of what is meant by Herndon's "excesses of rhetoric" might go on for pages, especially with reference to Lincoln's wife; but the above citations are enough to illustrate the lack of objectivity value in much that Herndon wrote.

How did Herndon come by these bursts of oratory which his followers so admire? He wrote to Jesse Weik, his collaborator, that, when he wished "to say something smart,"⁴⁶ he "took a toddy *as exciter*."⁴⁷ Just how he wrote under the spell of the "exciter" is not known, but he wrote to Lamon that he was hurried when he penned the notes, and then concluded, "The wonder is that I could get time to think about anything except—whiskey."⁴⁸

If a man may become incoherent in his big talk, after imbibing too freely of the "exciter," how is one to draw the line between Herndon's smart sayings and his realistic statements when prompted by the "exciter." Apparently Professor Randall is justified in warning students of Lincoln to have "a wholesome distrust for the excesses of rhetoric" which run on into meaningless aphorisms.

“PROCESSING”

One of the most important observations made by Professor Randall, with reference to Mr. Herndon's use of his sources, is set forth in this statement: “Information which he acquired by assiduous effort had to undergo Herndonian processing.”⁴⁹ It would appear that, in some instances, the processing attitude guided Herndon in rejecting certain contributions because, as he said, “They are not in harmony with fundamental elements of his [Lincoln's] nature.”⁵⁰ Again he wrote that he rejected much which was told him, because it was “contrary to what I knew, contrary to my records, and contrary to nature; still, I now wish I had written it out.”⁵¹

Herndon also indirectly processed unquestionable data by accepting and using them as authorized sources. Inferences apparently were freely submitted by Herndon in presenting his Lincoln. He wrote to Lamon, “My opinions are formed from the evidence *before you and in a thousand other things*, some of which I heard from Lincoln, others are inferences springing from his acts, from what he said, and from what *he didn't say*.”⁵² Just as unreliable as inferences were rumors which apparently he accepted with open arms. He wrote: “It is possible that somewhat of my ideas and opinions are made up of rumor and rumor alone.”⁵³

Once recorded, however, this processing of the reminiscences gathered by Herndon took several different forms, all of which would hardly measure up to the standards set by historians of the objectivity school. Public opinion seems to have been an early monitor to direct the preparation of his data. He wrote to Hart, shortly after his lecture on Lincoln in 1863: “If you see any comments on it in the papers, please clip out and send me. I wish to have them as a guide—how far to go— what to say, etc., hereafter.”⁵⁴

Processing material for the purpose of defending Lincoln—from what, it is not clear—engaged Herndon, who felt that the future reputation of the Emancipator rested on him, as he wrote to Hart, “I am the only man in the world who knows how to defend Lincoln and yet I am ‘cussed’ by those who are his friends.”⁵⁵ Some of his processing methods for Lincoln's defense he also reveals to Hart: “Have faith in the only man [Herndon] who knows what to do, to hedge, dodge, explain, modify, or deny, etc.”⁵⁶ His processing allowed him to feel that he could supply any information needed, as he wrote to an author, “any peculiarity or specialty of him you wish drawn out, please write to me and accommodate *mankind*.”⁵⁷ Possibly the most unjust piece of processing which Herndon did with his Lincoln notes, was to entirely distort the picture of Lincoln's

parents and his childhood days. He announced this theory to Hart: "The lower he was created, the higher and grander—looking at all things—to me he is."⁵⁸ He also advised Lamon to make his birth as lowly as possible.⁵⁹ In the preface, presumably written by Herndon, of the three-volume work, it is recorded that Lincoln came from "a stagnant putrid pool." The Herndonian processing has given the world a false impression of the important impressionable years of Abraham Lincoln.

"DESCRIPTIONS"

One phase of the Herndon writings which has been given more attention by historians than some of the more flagrant faulty conclusions, is the evidence which has apparently come from Herndon's personal contact with Lincoln. Yet even here Professor Randall has wisely sounded a word of warning. He states that one can "give a measure of credence to *descriptions* which arose from close daily association."⁶⁰ This cautious approach to the character of generally accepted data, invites one to inquire just how close was Lincoln's association with Herndon and when did Herndon assume the alleged Boswellian attitude toward his senior partner. Until Lincoln moved to Springfield in 1837, there is no probability that Herndon had any occasion to pay any attention to him. For the next seven years he was in a position to observe him casually, especially after he began to study law in the Logan-Lincoln office. There would be little opportunity for Herndon to closely observe Lincoln until he became Lincoln's junior partner in 1844. For the next sixteen years this partnership association continued. Supposedly, it was during this period that Herndon pursued his alleged Boswellian career. However, much of the time during this period, Lincoln was travelling the circuit and inasmuch as Lincoln and Herndon tried practically no legal cases together, they would have little opportunity for extended conferences on legal matters.

While Lincoln and Herndon went their own way legally, much of the time they also were quite independent of each other, politically. Joseph Fort Newton wrote a book in 1910 in which he reveals some exceedingly important observations. He published the correspondence which was carried on between Herndon and Theodore Parker, the famous Boston abolitionist. It would appear as if the factor which Parker hoped to promote is set forth in the preliminaries by Sanborn, the owner of the papers. He claimed that Parker was, "The inspirer of Herndon and through him of Lincoln."⁶¹ The evidence fails utterly in revealing any such influence. The book does prove that from 1845 to 1860, Parker instead of Lincoln was the great hero and ideal champion in Herndon's eyes.

A review of this correspondence between Herndon and Parker for a period of six years will reveal that very seldom Herndon mentioned Lincoln's name and never with any degree of deep admiration or unusual friendship. The only comment made by Herndon after the defeat of Lincoln by Douglas in 1858, follows: "I wrote to you concerning Illinois politics and our Republican defeat. Lincoln for the time being our standard bearer."²⁶ Not a very enthusiastic boost for his partner whom he is supposed to have worshipped and who ran such a magnificent race against the nationally acclaimed "Little Giant."

Newton himself observed this coolness of Herndon toward Lincoln, and commented on the fact that Herndon made no mention of Lincoln as a possible presidential candidate until December 15, 1859, when Herndon wrote Parker: "There are several good men spoken of for President—among them are Seward, Chase, Banks, Lincoln, Bates, Bell etc."²⁷ It will be observed that Herndon placed the man he was supposed to be pushing forward to the presidency, in the fourth position, without comment, only four months before the Decatur convention. After Lincoln's nomination at Chicago, in May 1860, until Lincoln started for the inauguration in February 1861, the prominence of Lincoln would crowd out any association between Lincoln and the obscure Herndon. During the last four years of Lincoln's life at Washington, even correspondence between the two men is almost negative.

What do contemporary records reveal about the beginnings of Herndon's hero worship of Lincoln and the genesis of his biographical effort? It was not until Lincoln's assassination and the return of Lincoln's body to Springfield that Herndon gave any evidence whatever of an unusual interest, or any appreciation of the fact, that he had been the law partner of an immortal man. Where Boswell had succeeded, Herndon had become a complete failure, and it is not known that he made any attempt whatever to gather biographical data about his "Johnson" until Lincoln was dead. Herndon wrote a letter about Lincoln to a friend on February 12, 1866, but he makes no comment whatever that he is writing the letter on the first anniversary of Lincoln's birth following his assassination.

Now, if we may follow back through the various periods of Lincoln's life and observe where Herndon should have spoken with some degree of authority, we will see that Professor Randall is correct in giving but a measure of credence to the Herndon-Weik papers.

Herndon was not in Washington at the time of Lincoln's assassination and only on one or two occasions saw him while he was President, from 1861 to 1865. There was little correspondence between them at this time. During the President-Elect period and the campaign months, Herndon had no place in the picture comparable to Nicolay and others who were with him constantly. We have already shown, by the correspondence with Parker, that from 1854 to 1860 the two men meant little to each other. For the ten years previous, if there was a close and sympathetic friendship between them it is not evident, and Herndon at no time was a welcome guest in Lincoln's home, about which he seems to have volunteered first-hand information. The casual acquaintance between 1831 and 1844 occurred twenty years before Herndon had any occasion to recall the incidents of those early days. For evidence during the first thirty-seven years of Lincoln's life he relied upon about anything anyone would tell him; some of the events being recalled fifty-five years or more after they had occurred.

Furthermore, Herndon lived for thirty-five years after Lincoln's death, yet he never wrote a book about his lamented friend but allowed others to use, as they saw fit, the material which he had collected.

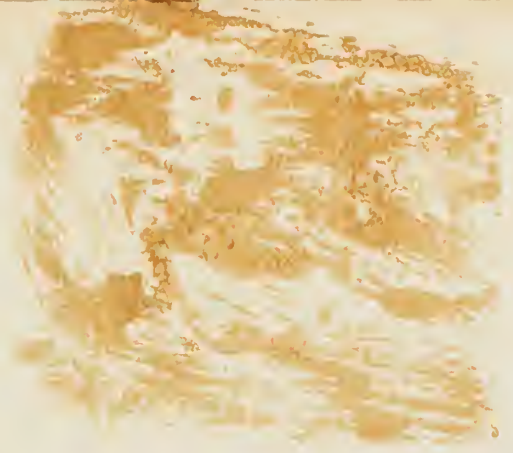
We are in full agreement with Professor Randall, who states that "the stuff of this collection needs sifting." This sifting should be done before the new objective biography of Lincoln emerges from the Lincoln papers in the Library of Congress.

NOTES

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4. RANDALL, *Lincoln the President*, p. ix.
5. RANDALL, *Lincoln the President*, p. x, p. ix.
6. HERTZ, *Hidden Lincoln*, p. 57.
7. HERTZ, *Hidden Lincoln*, p. 34.
8. HERTZ, *Hidden Lincoln*, p. 63. (Italics Herndon's.)
9. HERTZ, *Hidden Lincoln*, p. 53
10. HERTZ, *Hidden Lincoln*, p. 32.
11. RANDALL, *Lincoln the President*, p. ix.
12. HOWARD K. BEALE, "What Historians Have Said About the Causes of the Civil War," *Social Science Research Council Bulletin* 54 (New York, 1946).
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17. JOSEPH FORT NEWTON, *Lincoln and Herndon*, (The Torch Press, Cedar Rapids, Iowa, 1910) p. 315.
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20. HERTZ, *Hidden Lincoln*, p. 70. (Italics Herndon's.)
21. HERTZ, *Hidden Lincoln*, p. 70.
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23. RANDALL, *Lincoln the President*, p. x.
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26. NEWTON, *Lincoln and Herndon*, p. 82.
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30. HERTZ, *Hidden Lincoln*, p. 136.
31. HERTZ, *Hidden Lincoln*, p. 64.
32. HERTZ, *Hidden Lincoln*, p. 71.
33. HERTZ, *Hidden Lincoln*, p. 222.
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35. HERTZ, *Hidden Lincoln*, p. 40. (Italics Herndon's.)
36. HERTZ, *Hidden Lincoln*, p. 42. (Italics Herndon's.)
37. HERTZ, *Hidden Lincoln*, p. 268.
38. NEWTON, *Lincoln and Herndon*, p. 305.
39. RANDALL, *Lincoln the President*, p. x.
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41. HERTZ, *Hidden Lincoln*, p. 82.
42. HERTZ, *Hidden Lincoln*, p. 135. (Italics Herndon's.)
43. HERTZ, *Hidden Lincoln*, p. 83.
44. HERTZ, *Hidden Lincoln*, p. 208.
45. HERTZ, *Hidden Lincoln*, p. 54.
46. HERTZ, *Hidden Lincoln*, p. 261.
47. HERTZ, *Hidden Lincoln*, p. 261. (Italics Herndon's.)
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51. HERTZ, *Hidden Lincoln*, p. 70.
52. HERTZ, *Hidden Lincoln*, p. 63.
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